Dragon Rider

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Dragon Rider

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Summary

Hannibal Lecter is one of the last remaining Dragons, and he prides himself on the fact he's never taken a Rider and doesn't plan on ever doing so. His sister Mischa is still a fledgling, still filled to the brim with excitement and joy at the prospect of one day finding her Rider, the one human in all the world made solely for her.

Hannibal gave up such fantasies years ago, when the typical age of a Dragon and Rider match came and went and he still had no one. He's built up a wall around himself since then, convinced himself he's happier without a Rider, content to be alone in his mind and thoughts without the burden of another soul.

Notes

Day 1 of AU_Gust Prompts is: Fantasy!

We did a rewrite of this day because we decided to only do Hannigram for this prompt fest after we'd already written something for Day 1. We hope you enjoy this Dragon Rider story!

See the end of the work for more notes

Hannibal Lecter is one of the last remaining Dragons, and he prides himself on the fact he's never taken a Rider and doesn't plan on ever doing so. His sister Mischa is still a fledgling, still filled to the brim with excitement and joy at the prospect of one day finding her Rider, the one human in all the world made solely for her.

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Though lately his dreams have been filled with a sense of purpose, a track he has unknowingly set upon but is helpless to diverge from once he becomes aware of it. They are the sort of dreams that see him wandering through a forest, unaccompanied but somehow not alone, ever trekking towards a destination he's unfamiliar with, but knows instinctively will feel like *home.*

They have been occurring often enough in recent days that Hannibal has begun to wonder if they might mean something more, if fate might be subconsciously directing him to where he needs to be at any given moment.

Mischa nips at Hannibal's chin with her sharp teeth, pulling him back into the moment. They're on a hunt that's meant to teach her how to track prey over long distances, and it won't do for him to distract himself with ridiculous fantastical ideas. He smiles when he hears her purring in his mind, and then her soft voice filters in as well.

"Brother, come! You're meant to be showing me how to hunt!" Her youthful enthusiasm is contagious, Hannibal unable to stop himself from rumbling a deep purr at her in return, rubbing her forehead between her horns with his snout and licking along her cheek.

"Of course little bird, forgive me," he teases, taking flight and chuckling when he hears her grumbling through their mental link as she has to claw into the earth in order to remain standing in the wake of his ascent.

He's not made it far, his sister still in his sight, when he catches a new scent on the air and turns a full circle, his wingspan temporarily blocking out the light filtering in through the high treetops of the forest. He sees movement in the bushes, a massive wolf with a man slumped over his back. The man isn't moving, and all Hannibal can think is Mischa is far too young to take on a beast so large. Within seconds he's diving, whipping through the tree limbs and landing between the wolf and his sister.

He snarls, lashing his tail at the creature in an attempt to discourage it from coming closer. The wolf growls, pleading rather than aggressive, and lowers his great head towards the earth. The man slides from his back and lands on the ground between them, groaning weakly at the displacement.

"Winston," Hannibal hears the man mutter, and he steps cautiously forward. Before he has a chance to assess the situation further, Mischa is shifting into her human form and ambling

over to the man on shaky legs. She rarely leaves her Dragon form, still young enough that the shift takes a toll and leaves her weak. Hannibal shifts immediately, placing himself between her and the man before she can reach him.

"Mischa, no. We don't know who he is or what business he has here. He could be a *Hunter."* Hannibal warns, and her eyes grow wide and earnest. It's been a dozen or more years since their last run-in with a Hunter, and that had been the night they lost their parents. Mischa had been too young then to truly recall the night or the brutality, but she was left with the same aching hollowness that Hannibal was, knows the pain of loss far better than a fledgling ever should.

"He's not, brother. I can tell." Hannibal doesn't dismiss her claims, he knows she has the ability to sense things better than others. She can see into the heart of a creature and know its truth, a rare gift he always chooses to respect. But this man is still a stranger, and therefore a potential threat.

He takes a few steps closer, sniffing the air delicately. Sensing no one else in the immediate area, he bends down and sniffs again at the man's chest, only then noticing the sluggishly bleeding wound slashed jaggedly down his flank.

Hannibal touches his fingertips to the cut, and feels a *yank* deep in his stomach, compelling him closer.

"Did you just smell me?" He's startled at first, looking to Mischa to see if she's heard the words echoing loudly within the walls of his mind. She clearly hasn't, eyes still honed in on the bloodied flesh.

"Will he be alright?"

"I feel like I'm dying," the voice echoes again, growing weaker though no less invasive in Hannibal's mind.

"You will live, if you allow me to assist you," Hannibal attempts to push the thought to the human, only partially surprised when the man's eyes grow wide and flick side to side rapidly before finally settling upon Hannibal.

The man's thoughts are muddled, chaotic, and as inexperienced with this as he is, Hannibal can only glean bits and pieces of them. He senses first overwhelming confusion, quickly followed by panic. The human clearly isn't accustomed to not understanding what's happening around him, nor not being privy to the sort of information that can control a situation.

His gaze darts wildly, helplessly, from Hannibal to Mischa and back again, and Hannibal can't quell the desire to reach forward to pet through the man's hair, down his jaw and neck soothingly, using the abilities he has to instill peace within him. "We're Dragons," Hannibal informs him softly, because he can sense the human is desperately attempting to sort out their identities, "And we're going to help you. Please allow yourself to remain calm."

A delighted squeal pierces the heavy silence of the forest around them, jerking Hannibal's attention back to his little bird, who is currently seated on the ground and simultaneously squirming away from the tongue of the giant wolf attempting to lap at her face and reaching out to pet her hands through his fur.

"Even your companion shows no fear of us," Hannibal points out, directing the man's own unfocused gaze toward the pair of them just a few feet away. "Truly you should have no fear of us. We only wish to help."

"Thank you," Hannibal hears the voice echo in his mind once more as the last of the man's strength is drained from him and he falls limp on the forest floor. A glance to his left shows again that Mischa remains completely unaware of these unspoken words, though the wolf - Winston - tilts his head in curiosity before pacing over to sniff at his unconscious master, a soft whine building in his chest.

"I'll care for him," Hannibal promises, certain the wolf is more intelligent than the average beast of the forest.

An assumption which is confirmed when Mischa pipes up, "Brother is well-skilled in healing and care. Will's going to be just fine in his hands!"

Will.

The man never spoke, nor even *thought,* his own name, yet Mischa announces it as though it were common knowledge, and something within Hannibal both aches and is soothed by the sound of it, the way that it feels *right.*

His name is Will. There's no doubt about it.

Hannibal packs away this information for later perusal, casting a curious glance to his baby sister where she stands before the great beast, gazing adoringly into his steely grey eyes and scratching around his ears as though she's known him for ages.

He turns to the wolf, certain he will be understood when he asks plainly, "Can you transport him a ways further? We've a cave where we can heal him. Where he'll be safe."

Winston gives a soft whine, one broken by Mischa's touch as she specifies, "It's less than half a day's walk from here. We'll make it before sundown."

The wolf gives a soft huff and a nod of his great head at that, treading closer to Will and waiting patiently as Hannibal gingerly picks him up and lays him over the wolf's back.

Hannibal's eyes stray to his sister once more, curiosity filling him as he takes in her suddenly confident sway and soft smile, his heart clenching with affection as she murmurs her most favored proclamation as they begin their journey:

"Ever onward."

Moonlight filters in through the trees and bathes everything in a luminescent white sheen, Mischa's eyes flashing a brilliant shade of copper under the bright light when he looks over at her in her dragon form soaring through the forest with Will's best friend atop her back. Winston looks happier than Will can recall seeing him in the dozen or more years since he was cursed, content to have found someone not only willing to accept his bestial form but crafted perfectly for his human form as well, a Rider and his Dragon.

"They look peaceful," Hannibal agrees, his voice a low rumbling purr in Will's head. It's been nearly a year since Hannibal and Mischa found him wounded in the woods and nursed him to health while Winston explained the attack - a Hunter had been tracking them for weeks and finally managed to catch up with them. Will had leapt in front of Winston when the Hunter took his shot, the arrow going through Will's lower flank. He was lucky it had missed anything important, Hannibal easily able to heal him with his power, potions and several days rest.

Even after all this time, Will is still always pleasantly surprised to hear the voice of his Dragon - and lover - rippling through the halls of his mind, warm and thick as honey. *"They are peaceful. They deserve it."* Will replies silently, leaning low over Hannibal's back and running his hands down the Dragon's mighty chest, scales as soft and smooth as rain water over stones rippling beneath his fingertips.

Hannibal is warm beneath him, his presence warm *inside him,* and Will feels calm, loved, heated down to his bones. The space between his thighs feels hollow and molten, and Will knows when they finally dismount he'll be all over Hannibal, no matter the form he chooses to take for the night, a desperate need clawing at his throat and aching in his chest.

So many years spent alone with no one but Winston for company, never warming another's bed or knowing true love has left Will nearly overwhelmed with how strongly he loves Hannibal and is loved by him in kind. He would do anything, give anything, for the little family he has found. A year ago he thought he had reached the end of his life in a forest so much like this one, and he'd been happy enough to have given it completely for his friend. Tonight, in a forest a world away, he feels more alive than he's ever known, so full of love and hope for a future he can't imagine any other life. His life hadn't ended a year ago, instead, it had finally truly begun.

End Notes

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'Til next time! 💚 💜 BellaRai

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